

# Getting fueled up for the mission

by **Laura Pellegrino**  
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The 49th Logistics Readiness Squadron Fuels Flight ensures that Team Holloman’s vehicles and aircraft have the energy to complete their missions.

The flight provides more than 150,000 gallons of fuel per day to the entire wing and all the assigned tenant units, including the German air force and the Army’s White Sands Missile Range.

“Without the fuels flight, training and real world missions could not be accomplished,”

said Senior Master Sgt. Charles Wilcox, 49th LRS Fuels Flight manager. “Our mission is to receive, store and issue clean and dry petroleum products to the base.”

Getting clean and dry gasoline may sound impossible, but at the fuels laboratory, the flight makes sure the fuel is free of debris and water.

Once the fuel is tested, it’s stored in tanks on base. Combined, the tanks hold approximately 1.7 million gallons of fuel.

That fuel is ready when an aircraft needs it. When the aircraft maintenance crew calls in a request for fuel, it is processed by the control center. The center dispatches a refueling unit operator and refueling truck, which can carry up to 6,000 gallons of fuel.

Timely delivery of fuel is the most challenging part of the job, said Robert Hughes, refueling unit operator. Air Combat Command’s standard is 30 minutes, but the flight averages 3.8 minutes.

The flight also sup-

plies fuel to more than 2,000 ground vehicles on base. Members using government-owned vehicles can fill up at a designated gas station.

Flight members also prepare and supply liquid oxygen for pilots to breathe during high-altitude flights.

Teamwork is an essential aspect of the job, said Jesus Suarez, 49th LRS Fuels Flight superintendent.

“If part of the team doesn’t do their job, things can go wrong,” he said. “There’s no room for shortcuts, because people can get hurt.”

Each team member goes through six weeks of technical training at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas. After that, training is on-the-job.

The fuels flight is not only important on base, but also during deployments, Suarez said.

“Our people are in the front line. If an aircraft needs refueling, we need to send three refuelers across the desert,” he said.

The importance of the flight is expressed in their motto, Wilcox said.

“Without us, pilots are pedestrians,” he said.



**Staff Sgt. Jacek Hermann, German air force member, returns a grounding wire to the refueler. The wire is used to reduce the chance of a fire, which can start when static electricity builds around the plane and fuel hose.**



**Airman 1st Class Stephan Lasher, refueling unit operator, carries a fuel nozzle to a Tornado.**



**Ed Norman, 46th Test Group member, fills up a government owned vehicle with fuel provided by the fuels flight.**



**Master Sgt. Rolf Brockmeyer, German air force crew chief, detaches a fuel nozzle from a Tornado aircraft. The Tornado’s fuel tank holds 2,000 gallons of gas.**



**Airman 1st Class Stephan Lasher, refueling unit operator, removes a fuel hose from the refueling truck.**